
**Rural Development, Agriculture, &
Natural Resources Committee**

HB 1708

Brief Description: Concerning recreational fishing and hunting licenses.

Sponsors: Representatives Blake, Fitzgibbon, Springer, Irwin, Chandler, Robinson, Riccelli, Lekanoff, Dye, Jinkins and Tarleton; by request of Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases fees for certain recreational hunting and fishing licenses, tags, and endorsements, and extends the Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement through 2023.
- Changes distribution amounts from certain endorsements to certain enhancement accounts and activities.
- Changes the age to qualify as a "youth" for fishing licenses from age 15 to under age 16, removes the requirement for youth to obtain a license in order to fish, and deletes the Family Fishing Weekend license.
- Allows the use of temporary freshwater fishing licenses for the opening day of the lowland lakes fishing season.
- Authorizes the creation of multi-year license packages and temporary license fee discounts.
- Creates a one-time discount on the purchase of the first hunting license for new hunters upon completion of hunter education training.
- Allows a one-year deferral of the hunter education program for an individual if they are accompanied by a Washington-licensed hunter over age 18 while hunting.

Hearing Date: 2/15/19

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Background:

Hunting and Fishing Licenses.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) is responsible for managing the state's fish and wildlife resources and establishing basic rules and regulations governing the time, place, manner, and methods used to harvest or enjoy fish and wildlife. As a part of this responsibility, the Department issues licenses, tags, endorsements, and permits for hunting and fishing in Washington. Most revenue from licenses, tags, and endorsements is directed either to the Wildlife Account or to one of several enhancement accounts. Revenue directed to enhancement accounts is distributed in a manner proportional to the number of applicable recreational fishing or hunting licenses sold.

Individuals age 15 and older must purchase a fishing license, and there is a reduced fee for youth age 15. Youth under age 15 are not required to purchase fishing licenses or endorsements in order to fish. A person may purchase an annual or temporary freshwater, saltwater, or combination freshwater and saltwater fishing license (combination license). Temporary combination licenses are valid for a period of one to three consecutive days.

An annual freshwater or combination license is required to fish during the first eight days of the lowland lakes fishing season. Only active duty military personnel may fish during the first eight days of the lowland lakes fishing season with a temporary license.

In addition to a base freshwater or combination license, a Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement (Endorsement) is required in order to fish for salmon and steelhead on the Columbia River and its tributaries. Endorsement Program-funded project proposals developed by the Department are vetted through the Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Recreational Anglers Board (Board) and community review in the community in which the proposed project would occur. The Board is comprised of six to 10 volunteer members, appointed by the Director of the Department (Director), who represent the four Fish and Wildlife regions which make up the Columbia Basin. The Endorsement Program expires July 1, 2019.

A hunter or fisher that is required but fails to report their harvest is subject to an administrative penalty of no more than \$10. The penalty must be paid before a new hunting license, catch record card, or Dungeness Crab Endorsement may be issued.

Hunter Education.

Before purchasing a hunting license for the first time, individuals born after January 1, 1972, must show proof that they have completed a hunter education course. The course must include at least 10 hours of instruction covering firearms and outdoor safety, hunter responsibility, and wildlife management. To receive proof of completion, a person must pass an exam, either in a classroom setting or online, and demonstrate safe firearms handling skills in the field. Members of the United States military and certain law enforcement officers who complete the online hunter education course are exempt from the field firearms skills portion.

Summary of Bill:

Hunting and fishing licenses.

Most hunting and fishing license fees are increased by 15 percent, with a \$7 increase cap for fishing licenses and \$15 increase cap for hunting licenses. The fee for halibut catch record cards is maintained at \$5. The administrative penalty for failing to report a hunt or catch, if required, is set at \$10. The Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement Program is extended through 2023. A migratory bird authorization is required for certain additional species of bird.

A Fish Washington license package is created with a combination fishing license and certain endorsements, and is available for state residents. A Hunt Washington license package, also available to state residents, is created and includes a combination license with deer, elk, bear, cougar, a small game license, migratory bird permit and authorization, and two turkey tags. A Sportsperson's license combines the Fish Washington and Hunt Washington license packages.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) may create and sell combined license packages for hunting or fishing activities at or below the total cost of individual licenses included in the package. The Director may offer discounted promotional pricing to increase angler, hunting, or wildlife viewing participation.

The age at which a person qualifies as a "youth" for the purposes of purchasing fishing licenses is changed from age 15 to under age 16, and youth are not required to purchase fishing licenses or endorsements. The Family Fishing Weekend license is deleted. Temporary combination fishing licenses are valid for the opening day of lowland lakes fishing season. The Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) may authorize multi-year license packages as combined license packages and the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) may offer temporary promotional license discounts. The Commission may authorize a special hunting permit for goat, sheep, moose, or other big game species.

By November 1 of each odd-numbered year, the Commission may adopt a surcharge on recreational and commercial fishing licenses if determined necessary by the Commission to fund inflationary or other costs approved by the Legislature in the biennial budget.

Portions of revenue for hunting and fishing licenses must be deposited into enhancement accounts as follows:

- Warm Water Game Fish Account: 5 percent of all freshwater and combination licenses, including temporary combination licenses;
- Recreational Fisheries Account: 11 percent of all saltwater and combination licenses, including temporary combination licenses;
- Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group Account: 2 percent of all saltwater, freshwater, and combination fishing licenses, including temporary combination fishing licenses;
- Rockfish Research Account: 1 percent of all saltwater and combination fishing licenses, including temporary combination licenses; and
- Eastern Washington Pheasant Account: 4 percent of all small game hunting licenses.

The amount of revenue from each Puget Sound Dungeness Crab Endorsement applied to the removal of derelict fishing gear is changed from \$1 to 12 percent of the license revenue.

Hunter Education.

The Commission may offer a one-time \$20 discount on the purchase of the first hunting license for new hunters upon completion of the Washington's hunter education program. An individual may receive a one-year deferral from the hunter education program if they are accompanied by a Washington-licensed hunter over age 18 while hunting.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect July 1, 2019, except for section 19, relating to establishing a license surcharge, which takes effect September 1, 2021.